



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UPDATE: PROJECT CEASEFIRE
FIVE KC FELONS SENTENCED
FOR ILLEGAL POSSESSION OF FIREARMS

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that five felons were sentenced in federal court today, in separate and unrelated cases, for illegally possessing firearms. Today's sentencings, Graves said, mark additional progress under Project Ceasefire, the district's ongoing anti-crime initiative.

* **Willie Johnson**, 34, of Kansas City, Mo., was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Nanette K. Laughrey this morning to 15 years in federal prison without parole.

On Feb. 4, 2004, **Johnson** pleaded guilty to being a felon in possession of a firearm. By pleading guilty, **Johnson** admitted that he was in possession of a Ruger 9 mm handgun on Dec. 17, 2003. Under federal statutes, Graves explained, it is illegal for any felon to be in possession of a firearm or ammunition. **Johnson** has a 1988 criminal felony conviction for stealing and two counts of burglary, a 1989 criminal felony conviction for burglary and stealing, two 1991 criminal felony convictions for burglary, four 1994 criminal felony convictions for burglary and stealing, and three 1997 criminal felony convictions for burglary and attempted burglary.

Johnson was originally charged in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury on Jan. 7, 2004, in Kansas City.

This case was prosecuted by Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Stefan C. Hughes. The case was investigated by the Kansas City, Mo., Police Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

* **Charles A. Smith**, 23, of Kansas City, Mo., was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Nanette K. Laughrey this afternoon to one year and nine months in federal prison without parole.

On April 1, 2004, **Smith** pleaded guilty to being a felon in possession of a firearm. By pleading guilty, **Smith** admitted that he was in possession of a CN Romarm assault rifle on Feb. 6, 2004. Under federal statutes, Graves explained, it is illegal for any felon to be in possession of a firearm or ammunition. **Smith** has three 2003 criminal felony convictions for trafficking, unlawful use of a weapon and possession of a controlled substance.

Smith was originally charged in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury on Feb. 26, 2004, in Kansas City.

This case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Rudolph R. Rhodes, IV. The case was investigated by the Kansas City, Mo., Police Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

* **Michael E. Thomas**, 23, of Kansas City, Mo., also known as Jeremy J. Lara, was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Fernando J. Gaitan, Jr., this morning to five years in federal prison without parole.

On April 20, 2004, **Thomas** pleaded guilty to being a felon in possession of a firearm. By pleading guilty, **Thomas** admitted that he was in possession of a Taurus .38-caliber revolver on Nov. 12, 2003. Under federal statutes, Graves explained, it is illegal for any felon to be in possession of a firearm or ammunition. **Thomas** has a 2000 criminal felony conviction for burglary and a 2001 criminal felony conviction for tampering.

Thomas was originally charged in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury on Nov. 21, 2003, in Kansas City.

This case was prosecuted by Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Stefan C. Hughes. The case was investigated by the Independence, Mo., Police Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

* **Frederick L. Thompson**, 35, of Kansas City, Mo., was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Fernando J. Gaitan, Jr., this morning to two years and three months in federal prison without parole.

On March 5, 2004, **Thompson** pleaded guilty to being a felon in possession of a firearm. By pleading guilty, **Thompson** admitted that he was in possession of a Taurus .38-caliber revolver on Nov. 15, 2003. Under federal statutes, Graves explained, it is illegal for any felon to be in possession of a firearm or ammunition. **Thompson** has a 1990 criminal felony conviction for assault.

Thompson was originally charged in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury on Nov. 21, 2003, in Kansas City.

This case was prosecuted by Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Stefan C. Hughes. The case was investigated by the Independence, Mo., Police Department and the Bureau of Alcohol,

Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

* **Frank E. Ellis**, 25, of Kansas City, Mo., was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Nanette K. Laughrey, this morning to three years in federal prison without parole.

On March 2, 2004, **Ellis** pleaded guilty to being a felon in possession of a firearm. By pleading guilty, **Ellis** admitted that he was in possession of a Henry Repeating Arms .22 caliber rifle on Dec. 18, 2003. Under federal statutes, Graves explained, it is illegal for any felon to be in possession of a firearm or ammunition. **Ellis** has two criminal felony convictions for possession of a controlled substance.

Ellis was originally charged in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury on Jan. 7, 2004, in Kansas City.

This case was prosecuted by Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Angela Hasty. The case was investigated by the Independence, Mo., Police Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

Project Ceasefire

Project Ceasefire, launched in October 1999, is a cooperative initiative by federal and local law enforcement and the Kansas City Crime Commission that targets for federal prosecution persons who unlawfully use or possess firearms. Project Ceasefire has resulted in federal charges against 627 defendants, and convictions against 538 of those defendants, including 509 who pleaded guilty and 29 who were convicted at trial. A total of 481 of the 538 convicted defendants have been sentenced, and 57 currently await sentencing hearings.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at

www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow